AMA House of Delegates delays official stand on smoking and health question.

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AMA Leaves Cigaret Question Up To U.S.

By Joseph R. Hixson
N.Y. Herald Tribune Special

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J.— The American Medical Assn. side-stepped the cigaret-health question Wednesday and voted to "let George do it." George, in this case, is the United States Public Health Service committee to study the relationship of tobacco and disease.

The 227-member AMA house of delegates gave unanimous approval to a wait-and-see resolution recommended to the full house by its public health and occupational health committee. The committee recommended that the house turn down two resolutions on smoking offered by the Ohio and Florida delegations. The house did, unanimously.

What Was Proposed

The Florida resolution asked the AMA to state its recognition of the health hazards of smoking, and take steps to educate children against acquiring the habit. The Ohio resolution asked the AMA to resume its study of the blood-circulation and lung effects of smoking, but the committee-approved resolution noted that several of the researchers it would have named are already active in the USPHS study.

In its recommendations to the house, the committee said it was "in accord with . . . the intent" of the two strong resolutions, but could not recommend them now. The committee also said the AMA had a duty to point out to the young the effects of the use of toxic materials, including tobacco.

Pollution Matter

In another action the delegates denied any immediate need for further federal action to control air pollution.

The house also adopetd a trustees' report on narcotics. The report took these positions:

It disapproved maintaining addicts with narcotics on an outpatient basis, except in tighdy controlled experimental studies.

It condemned "cold turkey" withdrawal of narcotics from addicts as "inhumane."

It approved administration of narcotic heroin substitutes by doctors to addicts for 10 days to two weeks only if the addict could not be admitted to a hospital immediately.

It denied that drug addicts are criminal per se, said they were emotionally disturbed.

It maintained that drug addiction is a problem to be handled only under close medical supervision.

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AMA Refuses Strong Stand On Smoking

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP)—The American Medical Association, following the wishes of its board of trustees, refused Wednesday to take a strong position against smoking.

The association, however, in approving a committee report on smoking, agreed to an education program aimed at pointing out the effects of toxic materials, including tobacco, on young persons.

The AMA's House of Delegates voted to take a wait-and-see attitude before commiting itself to any position on smoking.

The House adopted a report from its Reference Committee on Public and Occupational Health, which said it "cannot incriminate a single factor as an etiological agent in disease without complete documentation."

"A continuing study of this important subject is mandatory and the report of the study committee of the U.S. Public Health Service should be received before conclusive statements regarding the hazards of the use of tobacco be endorsed by this House of Delegates," the report said.

The study report by the Public Health Service is expected to be published this fall.

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Anti-Smoking Sentiment

The effort to commit the American Medical Association to an all-out crusade against smoking cigarettes on the ground that they are linked with the increase of cancer of the lungs and throat ran into politics at the recent meeting of the 227-member AMA House of Delegates at Atlantic City.

AMA trustees were surprised at the widespread anti-smoking sentiment among the delegates. It was so strong, that they charged the Cancer Society had organized to stampede the delegates into passing a strong anti-smoking resolution. It was with some difficulty that they restrained a vote.

The trustees have been holding off a formal condemnation until the results of an official inquiry by the National Institute of Health is known. Opponents charged them with politics. They said the AMA had made a deal with congressmen from tobacco-growing states to keep the Kennedy medicare bill from a vote in the House.

Be that as it may, the AMA meeting in Portland, Ore., next December is likely to see the question put to a vote and the doctors definitely arrayed against smoking.

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